

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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LAB-06 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 OMB-01 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 L-03 NSC-07 PA-04 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15

SAJ-01 NIC-01 DRC-01 /136 W
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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0606

INFO USMISSION BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 16472

E.O. LL652: GDS

TAGS: PLAB, FR

SUBJECT: 12TH CONGRESS OF FORCE OUVRIERE

1. SUMMARY. A RINGING REAFFIRMATION OF PRINCIPLE
OF TRADE UNION INDEPENDENCE FROM GOVERNMENT AND
POLITICAL PARTIES AND A STERN REFUSAL OF ANY OPENING
TO THE CGT OR CFDT OR TO CAUTION THE SOCIALIST PARTY
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ALLIANCE WITH THE COMMUNISTS WERE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT

MESSAGES SENT OUT BY L854 DELEGATES MEETING IN
TOULOUSE AT THE TWELFTH FORCE OUVRIERE CONGRESS.
END SUMMARY.

2. THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S MORAL REPORT WAS APPROVED
BY NO LESS THAN 84.74 PERCENT WITH 11.7 PERCENT
NEGATIVE VOTES AND 3.89 PERCENT ABSTENTIONS. BEING
THE TRADITIONAL TEST OF LABOR LEADERS' AUTHORITY IN
FRENCH LABOR MOVEMENT, THE VOTE GIVES A STATISTICAL
MEASURE OF THE UNTARNISHED MORAL AUTHORITY AND
PRESTIGE BERGERON CONTINUES TO ENJOY WITHIN FO.
ONCE AGAIN HE WAS IN FULL COMMAND OF THE CONGRESS TO
WHICH HE REPEATEDLY COMMUNICATED HIS DEEP CONVICTION
THAT FO WAS ON A CORRECT COURSE BY REMAINING FAITHFUL
TO ITS PRINCIPLES OF INDEPENDENCE AND DEMOCRACY.
SURE OF HIMSELF, HE DID NOT HESITATE TO THREATEN
WITH EXPULSION ANY MEMBERS OR UNIONS WHICH WOULD
ATTEMPT TO CREATE FACTIONS WITHIN FO SEEKING TO
SERVE THE INTERESTS OF A POLITICAL PARTY. HE
THUNDERED, "WE WILL NOT ALLOW OTHERS TO DO WHAT WE
HAVE DENIED THE COMMUNISTS."

3. TRADITIONALLY FO CONGRESSES ARE EXEMPLARY IN
THEIR RESPECT OF THE DELEGATES' RIGHT TO SPEAK
THEIR MINDS AND AS A RESULT ARE LESS DISCIPLINED
THAN CGT OR CFDT CONGRESSES. IN ADDITION FO GATHERINGS
SERVE DEMONSTRATE THE STRENGTH OF THE COMMON BOND
THAT FO MEMBERS SHARE AND WHICH IS AT THE ROOT OF
FO'S REMARKABLE COHESION AND REASON FOR ITS EXISTENCE,
I.E. REJECTION OF TOTALITARIANISM AND RESPONSIBLE
PRACTICE OF A TRADITIONAL TRADEUNIONISM SEEKING
PROGRESS THROUGH COLLECTIVE BARGAINING.

4. THE TOULOUSE CONGRESS HAD A SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY
TO DEMONSTRATE THE FOREGOING. IT HAD TO DEAL WITH
AN AMATEURISH BUT WELL THOUGHTOUT ATTEMPT BY LEFT
WING SOCIALIST PARTY SYMPATHIZERS OR MEMBERS (CERES)
TO LURE THE DELEGATES TO OPEN A DIALOGUE WITH CGT
AND CFDT IN THE INTEREST OF "GREATER TRADE UNION
EFFECTIVENESS". THEY ADVOCATED THAT FO SHOULD PLAY
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A GREATER ROLE IN POLITICAL LIFE BY ACCEPTING
RESPONSIBILITY TO MAKE VALUE JUDGMENTS ON GOF ACTIONS
AND LEADERS INSTEAD OF HIDING BEHIND NEUTRALITY IN
THE NAME OF TRADE UNION INDEPENDENCE. PROPONENTS OF
THIS VIEW LED BY PTT IN LYON AND OTHER CIVIL SERVICE
UNIONS DREW HEAVILY ON INTERNATIONAL DETENTE AND ON
RESULTS OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS TO ARGUE THEIR
CASE. IN AN EFFORT NOT TO APPEAR SEPARATED FROM FO

MAINSTREAM THE PROPONENTS OF THIS ORIENTATION MADE
THE TACTICAL MISTAKE OF PRESENTING THEIR POSITION
AS AN AMENDMENT TO GENERAL RESOLUTION PROPOSED BY
THE MAJORITY INSTEAD OF A SEPARATE TEXT. THE
AMENDMENT DID NOT COME TO A VOTE SINCE IT WAS
REJECTED BY THE RAPPORTEUR. HENCE ONLY GAGE OF
"OPPOSITION'S" STRENGTH IS THE 8.1 PERCENT BLANC
BULLETINS CAST IN THE VOTE BETWEEN THE MAJORITY'S
RESOLUTION (76.43 PERCENT) AND ANARCHO-TROTSKYITE
TEXT (13.90 PERCENT). GIVEN THE FACT THAT
TRADITIONALLY THERE ARE 3 TO 4 PERCENT ABSTENTIONS
IN FO VOTES THE "PS OPPOSITION" DOES NOT SEEM TO
REPRESENT MORE THAN 4 PERCENT.

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5. RESOLUTIONS. THE CONGRESS ADOPTED RITUALISTICALLY A NUMBER OF RESOLUTIONS WHICH ALTHOUGH DID NOT CONTAIN ANYTHING NEW WERE NEVERTHELESS DRAFTED IN A MORE CONCISE LANGUAGE WITH THE INTENT TO PROVIDE REAL GUIDANCE TO FO'S AFFILIATES AND MILITANTS. THE
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UNDERLYING THOUGHT BEHIND THE RESOLUTIONS WAS COMMITMENT TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, A FIRM OPPOSITION TO ANY INCOMES POLICY, AN UNWAVERING SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC SERVICE AND THE NATIONALIZED SECTOR AGAINST ANY THREAT OF REVERTING TO PRIVATE HANDS AND A CALL FOR THE CREATION OF THE UNITED STATES OF EUROPE.

6. ELECTIONS. ALL MEMBERS OF FO'S CONFEDERATE BUREAU WERE REELECTED AND TWO NEW MEMBERS WERE ADDED TO IT FOR A TOTAL OF THIRTEEN. FOR THE FIRST TIME A WOMAN WAS ELECTED TO THIS EXECUTIVE, I.E. PAULETTE HOFMAN, SECRETARY OF THE HOSPITAL WORKERS UNION IN LILLE AND ALSO FOR THE FIRST TIME A "CADRE" WAS ADDED, I.E. ANDRE HEURTEBISE OF GAS AND ELECTRICITY WORKERS FEDERATION. ANDRE BERGERON WAS REELECTED SECRETARY GENERAL AND PIERRE TRIBIE TREASURER.

7. THE RETIREMENT OF CAMILLE MOURGUES PROVIDED THE ONLY EMOTIONAL OUTBURST IN THE CONGRESS AND THE CONCLUDING ACT. THE DELEGATES GAVE HIM A STANDING OVATION WHEN IN HIS FAREWELL SPEECH HE RECALLED THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH FO WAS CREATED AND THE STRUGGLE THAT WAS WAGED AGAINST THE COMMUNISTS TO ASSURE FO'S SURVIVAL.

8. THE GREATER NUMBER OF YOUNGER AND YOUNGER DELEGATES, FEWER SPEECHES BY OLDTIMERS, SHORTER SPEECHES BY YOUNGER LEADERS DEALING WITH SPECIFIC PROBLEMS AND AVOIDING GENERALITIES, WERE SOME OF THE OTHER SIGNIFICANT REVELATIONS OF THIS CONGRESS. FO IS SLOWLY PASSING INTO NEW HANDS AT LEAST AT THE GRASS ROOTS AND MIDDLE LEVEL LEADERSHIP.

JUDGING BY THE SPEECHES FROM THE FLOOR THE PRESSURE
TO REJUVENATE THE TOP LEADERSHIP HAS ALREADY BEGUN.

9. COMMENT. AT A TIME WHEN THE CFDT - FEN ARE
PREPARED TO JOIN CGT IN SEEKING TO CREATE PRIVILEGED
TIES WITH POLITICAL PARTIES OF THE LEFT, FO'S
REAFFIRMATION OF A TRADITIONAL TYPE OF TRADE UNIONISM
REPRESENTS A STABILIZING FACTOR IN THIS TRADITIONAL
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POLITICAL STAGE. IT OFFERS FO AN OPPORTUNITY TO
APPEAL TO THE RANK AND FILE IN A LANGUAGE WHICH
PUTS PRIORITY ON BREAD AND BUTTER ISSUES. AS A
RESULT FO CAME OUT OF THE CONGRESS MORE UNITED THAN
EVER BECAUSE IT PROVED ITSELF CAPABLE TO RESIST THE
POLITICAL TEMPTATIONS AND TO OVERCOME THE TRADITIONAL
TIES WHICH THE OLDER GENERATION OF FO LEADERS HAD
MAINTAINED WITH THE SOCIALIST PARTY. AS LONG AS
BERGERON REMAINS AT THE HEAD FO CAN BE COUNTED UPON
TO CONTINUE ON ITS PRESENT "REFORMIST" COURSE
SEEKING THROUGH COLLECTIVE BARGAINING THE SMALL
IMPROVEMENTS THAT CIRCUMSTANCES PERMIT
WHOSE CUMMULATIVE EFFECT IS NEVER LOST ON THE RANK
AND FILE.

10. THIS IS NOT TO SAY, HOWEVER, THAT VOICES WILL
NOT CONTINUE TO RISE WITHIN FO TO URGE FROM TIME TO
TIME UNITY OF ACTION WITH THE OTHER LABOR FEDERATIONS
IN THE NAME OF GREATER BARGAINING POWER OR TO ARGUE
FOR GREATER SENSITIVITY AND CONCERN FOR THE SOCIALIST
PARTY PROGRAM AND FORTUNES. THE TOULOUSE CONGRESS
DEMONSTRATED THAT THE GREAT MAJORITY OF FO LEADERS
AND MEMBERS WILL REMAIN ALERT TO THE DANGERS TO
DEMOCRACY OF ANY DEPARTURE FROM FO'S PRINCIPLES.
IRWIN

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